

BAPTISM

I'm a Christian... What Next?

*"When anyone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun."
2 Corinthians 5:17*

Who should be baptized?

Every person who's believed in Christ.

"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized." Acts 8:13, "Simon himself believed and was baptized." Acts 8:12, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

At RockPointe, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them. There is only one qualification in the Bible to be baptized. You've got to believe in Christ. Obviously you've got to be old enough to understand what that's all about. There are many churches that practice the baptism of confirmation. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own confession of faith. This custom only began about 300 years after the Bible was finished. It's not in the Bible. It's just a tradition. This is different than the baptism talked about in the Bible, which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ.

Why do we do that?

1. Jesus commanded the church to do it. He said, "Go baptize."
2. It's a symbol that your body is a member of the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Why should I be baptized?

1. To follow the example set by Christ. Mark 1:9 *"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river."* Why was Jesus baptized? In order to save Him? No, He didn't need to be saved. He was perfect. Baptism doesn't save you. It is a symbol of obedience and it's an example that we are to do what He has done.

2. Because Christ commands it. Christ commands that every Christian be baptized. *"Jesus said, 'Go then to all people every and (1) make them My disciples, (2) baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and (3) teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" These are the three things the church is commanded to do: Make disciples - help people come to know Christ; Baptize them; Help them grow up. Many people think, "I'll be baptized after I've grown up. After I know about the Christian life, then I'll be baptized." No, it's right after you make the decision to follow Christ. Notice the order: You make the disciples, then you baptize them, then you spend the rest of your life growing as a Christian.*

3. It demonstrates that I'm really a believer. The Bible says, *"Many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized."* Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. It just shows that you are a Christian. A wedding ring doesn't make you married, it is a symbol of a commitment that

was made that makes you married. Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward commitment.

That's what baptism is. Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. It's just an outward symbol of an inward commitment. It is your commitment to Christ that saves you. Baptism just says to the world, "I'm not ashamed to tell the whole world what's happened to me. I've given my life to Christ." A little boy once asked, "when can I get advertised?" That's what baptism is. Baptism is an advertisement for Jesus. It's saying, "I'm not ashamed of Jesus Christ."

Jesus once said, "If you're ashamed of Me in front of the world then I'll be ashamed of you in front of My Father in heaven." Some people who won't get baptized because they don't want to get their hair wet. Are you that ashamed of Jesus Christ? The Bible says, *"We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands."* How do you prove you're a Christian? You obey His commands. One of His first commands is, Be baptized.

What is the meaning of baptism?

Baptism does two things.

1. It illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection. *"Christ died for our sins. He was buried and He rose again."* the Bible says *"For when you were baptized you were buried with Christ and in baptism you were also raised with Christ."* At RockPointe we baptize the way they did in the Bible -- putting people all the way under the water. It is a symbol of a burial and resurrection. Just like Jesus Christ died and was buried in the ground for three days and then rose again.

2. Baptism illustrates my new life as a Christian. In the Bible, there was no such thing as a person claiming to be a Christian and not be baptized. It was automatic. You were baptized as soon as you gave your life to Christ.

Why should I be baptized by immersion?

"By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead so we also may live a new life."

It doesn't make you a Christian, it shows you already believe.

There are some churches that sprinkle a little water on your forehead. Some pour a little water. Some dip a little bit. Other churches put you all the way under the water. Why do we believe and practice at RockPointe you should be baptized by immersion? Four reasons:

1. Because Jesus was baptized that way. We want to do it the way they did it in the Bible. It says *"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water."* He went down to the Jordan River. John the Baptist baptized Him in the river. He set the example.

2. Every baptism in the Bible was by immersion. Example *"Then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Then they came up out of the water."*

3. That's what the word means. The Greek word "Baptize" literally means "dip under water."

4. It best symbolizes a burial and resurrection. The founders of denominations agree about this.

Martin Luther (Lutherans) said, "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed as the word imports and the mystery signifies."

John Calvin (Presbyterians) "The word `baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."

John Wesley (Methodists) "Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."

They all agree, whether they do it or not, that this is the way they did it in the Bible. Catholics are now going back to baptizing by immersion. Los Angeles Times says, "Many Catholics are returning to full immersion baptism of church history and its greater symbolism." The article said since 1988 every Catholic church in Orange County has been built with a baptism pool so they can immerse. Why? It says, "Catholic churches have realized `This brings out far more clearly the true meaning of baptism of being buried with Christ and entering into a new life.'" Even the Catholics who, for centuries, just sprinkled are saying, we're going back to baptism by immersion.

When should you be baptized?

As soon as you become a believer, or as soon as you realize its importance. Maybe you've been a believer for a while but you didn't realize how important it was. Jesus said, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments."** In Acts it says those who believed were baptized that day.

"Philip began with the scripture and told him the good news about Jesus and as they traveled along the road they came to some water and the man said, "Look! Here's water. Why shouldn't I be baptized right now?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The man answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he went down into the water and Philip baptized him."

There's nothing special about the water. The water is not holy. What is holy is the faith of the people. It's not where you're baptized. It's why you're baptized -- to publicly say, "I am an adult consenting follower of Christ." There's no reason to delay. **After you've decided to receive Christ you ought to be baptized.**

What do you wear when you're going to be baptized?

Whatever you feel comfortable in. If you're a woman, maybe a swim suit with a t-shirt over the top simply for modesty. For men, just a pair of shorts and a t-shirt: something you don't mind getting wet in.

